Polycon EV Conversion

Check out the Polycon EV fourm at EV-Nova.net

Well, every story has a beginning, and the Polycon EV plug began in 1996. I had acquired a copy of Escape Velocity from somewhere, and it fairly quickly was distributed through my friends. It did not take long for me to try opening it up in Resedit to see if there was some way to get a Kestrel without playing the game for three months, and I quickly discovered that the EV scenario could be edited with the templates in the EV data file. We quickly

figured out how the data files worked well enough to alter them to cheat, as many people no doubt did at first. But it did not take long for me to take on a more useful project. The previously mentioned group of friends were also the group of people I played role-playing games with. Our game of choice was not Dungeons and Dragons or any other game you might have heard of however, it was Polycon, a absurdly complex galactic domination game hacked together from sources from at least a dozen other games. It was brought up at some point how cool it would be to rewrite those EV data files to make a Polycon game, I already had the half finished attempts at making Polycon stuff for Doom and Marathon on my hard drive. I decided to give it a try anyway, and a TC was born.

Initial attempts to write the plugin were painfully slow. The main reason for this was indirectly due to my general lack of Internet access, I had no idea of the existence of the EV bible or EV plugins, I had never even read the Escape Velocity readme. At that point I was figuring out how to make the conversion by reverse engineering the EV data files and making a lot of educated guesses. In looking over the notes I made back then now, it strikes me how much stuff I got wrong, for months I thought the EV ship limit was 32 ships because of the size of the small icon matrix, that the engine was only able to support one fleet resource, and dozens of other things equally embarrassing. But by sometime in 1997, I had a working prototype of the plugin grafted into the data files. It replaced all of the original EV systems and ships with Polycon equivalents, and more importantly, it worked. Not long after that, I got a copy of EV Override from somewhere, and cringed. I could harp on how horrible the EV Override graphics were (What the hell is up with the dithering in the startup screen??), but the real concern for me was that my conversion would not work with it. Polycon EV got shelved for a year, while I made Warcraft maps, Marathon Infinity levels, and other projects. At some point in 1998 I got a new computer, a Powermac, and I realized that I could finally make sprites bigger than 96 pixels square for EV. The conversion got dusted off and worked on while I added some, well, crappy ship graphics to it. Eventually it got stuffed away somewhere again and I moved on to other things.

In 2001 I finally took another look at the Polycon EV plugin. By this time I had made hundreds of maps and conversions for different games, and more importantly, some of them had actually been released to the public. I had just left the Myth 2 mapmaking community for reasons I would rather not discuss, and I was looking for something to pass the time. I came across the old 1997 Polycon EV plugin, and decided to fix it up, with new graphics, and fix all the other old problems that came from my lack of access to the EV bible. In a space of four months, the plugin was completely rebuilt, and was up and running in

1997

2001

2002

(Evolution of graphics between versions)

both EV and EV Override. The 2001 version of Polycon EV was nearly ready for the next step. Originally I wrote a lengthy paragraph here, explaining in detail why I was unable to put the plugin into beta and why I had no way to release it, but I removed it because it was not really relevant to the matter at hand. All that matters is that I had reached a wall in the plugin's release, one which I did not have the ability to circumvent.

The lack of hosting quickly took the wind out of the sails of the project. The plugin went into cold storage for another six months, while I did other things. Eventually I obtained a copy of EV Nova from a friend, and the entire question of porting the 2001 plugin to Nova was raised. At this point the Polycon EV plug had been in development for six years, and it was starting to seem like a real shame that it might never be released. So once again, I found myself working on a Polycon EV plugin. The following is the plugin's progress log.

March 26, 2002
Obtain copy of EV Nova from a friend. After looking it over, think "Maybe I should port Polycon to this"

April 4, 2002
Begin testing of feasibility of porting Polycon EV to the Nova engine. I am told that a porting utility called Port Authority will be available "soon" After some testing, I figure out that most of the resources contain the same data as before, the new features have merely been appended to the end of the resource files. Unfortunately there were a few resources, like the system resource, that add new data right to the middle of the old data files. I decide to go ahead and manually port the plugin anyway, instead of waiting for the porting utility.

April 10 2002
All of the original ships and ship sprites have been imported. Due to changes in the way the turn speed field in the ship resource works, they do not work right, but they are in. The sprites look like total crap next to the Nova sprites but they do work. The core worlds "Polycon, Vecon, etc" have been ported.

April 15 2002
Krellre space is in. Some of Miamier space has been added. The heavy freighter, carryall, and most of the other generic cargo ships have been re-rendered to take advantage of Novas better graphics. The Kilingi warship kicks ass with the new Nova light graphics.Unfortunately due to the strange lighting system I used when I made the Dumpster model, I can not re-render the sprites without retexturing the ship, so it will have to wait until I have

nothing better to do to be upgraded.

April 20 2002
Most of the eastern systems are in. Most of the Polycon ships are in. The Tydirium was about a pain in the ass to make because of the animated ESG on the front of it. I also added shield bubbles for some of the ships, but after seeing how annoying it was going to be to have shields flashing everywhere in a big fight, I removed them from half of the ships to make them more scarce. Osiris cruiser looks kinda silly with such a big ship having such puny looking engine flashes. Maybe I will remodel it for the final version.

April 26 2002
More systems added. Mostly Mier sector systems. Added the prison ship and a few others. I animated the Personnel transport so it would open its foils when landing, but it looked somewhat silly, so that got cut out. Most of the normal weapons are in. Folder and lighting gun get new explosion graphics, which vastly improve the "cool factor" of the weapons. Discover I can not dominate planets when I try to take over Davids world. After spending two days trying to figure out a good way to get around the Yahoo email address block on the Ambrosia forums, I finally make a post to the developers board asking if anyone knows a solution to this problem. Nobody does.

May 1, 2002
Added the Polycon stargates and many more systems from the old plug. Made new graphics for some of the stellar objects. The default interface sidebar has been changed. Considered changing the name Erick Cheek's Vogons to lessen the risk of people screaming "ripoff" Most of the Draconen weapons have been added.

May 8, 2002
All of the material from the 2001 EV Polycon plugin has been ported to Nova, and the Port Authority program that everyone told me to wait for has still not been released. If I had waited for Port Authority, the plugin would still be locked in EV classic. All of the ships from the original plugin are in and working, and more than half have new graphics. Added Llisis "pirate" fighter, that animates when firing. Azguard cruiser has been remodeled.

May 15, 2002
I am seriously not looking forward to rerendering the Sorhal cruiser because of the rotating midsection. The Tydirium was bad enough. Most of the rest of the Sorhal ships have been remodeled, and I added the Nymph, a Sorhal ship that was cut from the 2001 version of the plugin because of the 64 ship limit. Part of Robotic plague space is in. The Robotic plague spores and most of the Robotic Plague weapons have been added. The Vecon mission string is finished. My original plan was to do ten groups of missions for the player to play, one for each of the major goverments, each being ten missions long. After being reminded of how much I hate making missions by making the Vecon string, I think I will have to scale back to a more manageable six missions if I want to meet my August beta deadline.

May 24,2002
Well the Meta galaxy is nearly done. The Takari gate is in. Most of the ships have been remodeled. Lots of new weapons that were not in the 2001 plugin like neutron cannons and plasma torches have been added. The Neutral zone

is done fully. Also did the black hole graphics (they suck), and did some of the Polycon mission strings. Bad terrorist jokes from the 1997 plugin (well before 911 changed from a phone number to a terrorist attack) keep on popping up in the news window, which will have to go. Added some crons to make Polycon and its enemies attack each other periodically, but the crons keep posting news about the attacks long after they happened. Again I resorted to posting in the Ambrosia Developer board about this, but was told there were only two things to do about it, make back to back crons so there would be no generic news, or complain.

June 3, 2002
The worldship has been rendered. Most of the meta galaxy is done. The Polycon mission string is done. About half of the interface graphics are done. Also redid the logo and splash screen, and conferred with people about having custom intro music written. Discovered a major bug that caused the entire universe to hate the pilot for no reason (it had never shown up before because for my testing I was using a test pilot whose legal rating had been inflated to make him a "Leading Citizen" at every planet.

(Plague worldship)

June 10, 2002
The Polycon string is done. The Meta galaxy is done. All of the ships, save the Sorhal Cruiser and a few others, have been re-rendered. Also added the Horus fighter and a few other bits of technology that are developed during the course of the game. Fixed the problem with the players legal rating. I removed the most glaring of the ripoffs from the planet descriptions, but for the rest of it players are just going to have to live with it or go download the Star Wars plugin.

June 25 2002
A large percentage of the Takari tech has been added. Also added the Horus prototype and numerous other bits of "fringe" technology for the player to find. Finally, after a month of fiddling, figured out a way to fix the problem with the crons not turning off. Added the "Mac Plus" an easter egg ship for the pers's from the 68K Mac Liberation Army. Started work on the Meridians, which will no doubt be accused of being ripped off from the Aurorans. Still need to rerender that Sorhal Cruiser...

July 9 2002.
Rerendered the Genocide Cruiser. Added most of the rest of the Meridian tech. Meridian space is nearly complete. Fixed numerous spelling errors and other small bugs that slipped in from the 1997 plugin. Must go play Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds.

July 27 2002
All of the Meridian stuff is in. Part of Naglafar space is in. The core missions

are done. Still have not found someone to host the beta, which should be ready any day now. Rendered the Naglafar colony carrier.

August 11 2002
Plugin is ready for beta, which is a moot point because I have no place to host the beta. Added the Byspa and Valores new fighter, and fixed numerous bugs. Time to play the waiting game.

August 18 2002
Burned a copy of the Polycon beta onto a CD and left it in a geocache. I have no life.

August 26 2002
Still have no way to put the plugin into beta. Mailing CDs to the people who end up beta testing it is looking more and more likely. Finally got around to getting permission to use the title screen music from the artist who made it, and acquired information about encoding it from the Ambrosia forums. Added a few more missions.

September 15 2002

Reports from the beta testers are coming in. Minor bugs are being fixed. Ended up mailing the beta out on CD's. A large bug caused by the new version of EV Nova was sucessfully patched.

October14 2002

Polycon EV 1.0 is out. Go get it.

October 23 2002

The Polycon EV 1.1 uptdate is available from the EV Addons page. It fixes the following bugs.

-Reactors no longer have wild recharge values
-Meson cannon outfits now correctly called "Meson" cannon instead of "Mason cannon"
-Harkonen no longer shows up when you have a lens
-Cloaking device flags now set correctly
-Scimitar Fighter now correctly spelled
-Dicensphere changed to Dyson Sphere
-Capacitor now correctly spelled
-PSPs no longer have foolishly low price
-Llisis bays no longer called "Hawk Adv bays"
-Meridians now have a "Blow stuff up" mission at the end of their mission set.
-Translators no longer show up when they have not been invented yet
-Pneumatic now correctly spelled
-Take over Sxxix mission now displays a message onscreen when the enemy forces have been destroyed
-Pirate traps no longer display a picture of a coretap in the dialog box.
-Machine fighter now has dual missle launchers instead of duel missle launchers
-Get Archammer and Get Mining Drill missions are now harder
-Tre'var fighter no longer shows up when it has not been invented yet

-Sorhali Shipyards will now let you land after you have moved it to the Dead Zone
-Pirate Traps no longer give the player Alien Artifacts
-Omegacon fighter voices now set correctly
-Strength values for ships changed to lower combat requirements.
-Draconen Neutrino Charges no longer called Draconen Bombs in the shipyard.

Febuary 1 2003

The Polycon EV 1.2 uptdate is available from the EV Addons page. It fixes the following bugs.

-Approximately 100 spelling and grammatical errors fixed.
-Added a Soyuz space capsule to the Sol system.
-Added FAQ to the readme.
-TTP Shogun no longer mounts nonexistent weapon.
-IRS planets no longer have Takari cruisers in their defense fleets.
-Draconen fighter bay no longer costs 0 credits.
-Microtorpedoes now priced more reasonably.
-New Veneria no longer launches "null" ships in its defense fleet.
Disrupter no longer misspelled "disruptor" in 20 different places.
-Galvenx Missiles no longer use Plaguehammer ammunition.
-Coarse language related to some of the pers resources cleaned up.
-Robotic Plague spores now act "dead" after destruction of the Worldship.
-The bomber variant of the Machine fighter no longer has the targeting picture of a Tydirium.
-Icara Shipyards now has a valid defense fleet.
-Missile no longer misspelled "missle" in 20 different places.
-The M-03 and M-04 systems now have a starfield.
-Meridian "Invade DMZ" mission now has completion text.
-Added an autotyper utility to the download to fix Stuffit 7 corruption.
-The completion text for the final Robotic Plague mission now displays the correct picture.